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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000584

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENCY COUNCIL, PM AGREE TO CLOSER  
COLLABORATION

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel V. Speckhard for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Vice Presidents Adel Abdel Mehdi and Tariq al-Hashemi told the DCM on February 15 that the Presidency Council and Prime Minister have agreed to work together more closely by holding weekly meetings to discuss important issues. The group had not decided on a formal structure or a program. Abdel Mehdi said Da'wa was still reluctant to join a moderate front and that the other possible moderate front members should continue consulting each other in a virtual, unannounced front. Hashemi was eager to prepare the new group's agenda and clarify its authorities. The Vice Presidents said the Presidency Council did not have a chance to discuss the draft De-Ba'athification law at their meeting yesterday but promised to look at an Embassy draft soon. Hashemi also said he had sent a letter to Talabani suggesting the Presidency Council seek the suspension of the current De-Ba'athification procedures until a reformed law is passed.  
END SUMMARY.

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Presidency Council and PM Agree to Meet Weekly  
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12. (C) Abdel Mehdi reported that in response to an inquiry from President Jalal Talabani, PM Nuri al-Maliki agreed to meet weekly with the Presidency Council. Abdel Mehdi said it would be something similar to an executive council, and noted that the Presidency Council and Cabinet are both responsible for executing policy, according to the constitution. Abdel Mehdi said Maliki does not feel such a council would be infringing on his authorities. He added that a program for the group would be discussed at their first meeting.

13. (C) Abdel Mehdi said Da'wa is still reluctant to join a moderate front. He said the other possible members would continue consulting with each other even without the announcement of a formal front. Abdel Mehdi said Talabani met with Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) leader Abdul Aziz al-Hakim last night to urge him to get Itilaf's support for the moderate front, but Abdel Mehdi did not have a readout of the meeting yet.

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De-Ba'athification A Multifaceted Issue  
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14. (C) Abdel Mehdi reported that the Presidency Council did not have a chance to discuss the Embassy's draft De-Ba'athification law at their meeting yesterday. The Political Counselor explained the Embassy's draft was a compromise version of three drafts in discussion in the Council of Representative's (CoR) De-Ba'athification Committee, and it focused on reconciliation and justice. She

explained the draft law would put a quick end to the case-by-case review of former Ba'ath Party members by pardoning everyone below the far'a level. The law would provide measures to focus on reconciliation such as educational and cultural activities and a victims' compensation law. Additionally, a professional, Ministry of Justice special investigations unit could continue to investigate those Ba'athists who were involved in crimes.

15. (C) Abdel Mehdi agreed to look at the Embassy draft. He noted that the De-Ba'athification law was going to be tricky, saying the GOI did not want to be seen as rewarding Ba'athists by giving them their jobs back. He said people who opposed Saddam's regime still feel handicapped from the past. It is a political, historical, social, and educational issue, he continued. Abdel Mehdi said it was important to give justice to all, even former Ba'athists, and noted that most of the former Ba'athists, especially at the lower-levels, were Shia. The DCM and Political Counselor urged the senior leadership to move Iraq forward on this issue, saying they hoped the Presidency Council would improve the Embassy draft and submit it to the CoR for consideration.

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Raid at the Baratha Mosque  
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16. (C) The DCM noted the US President's appreciation of Grand Ayatollah Sistani's moderating voice in Iraq and said the US would like to stay well-connected to him. Abdel Mehdi relayed that some of Sistani's representatives were detained during a raid on the SCIRI-affiliated Baratha Mosque in Baghdad yesterday morning. Abdel Mehdi complained that the raid was politically motivated. He said mostly papers were taken from the mosque, and added that the Iraqi soldiers

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behaved poorly while the Coalition soldiers were polite.

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Hashemi Eager to Shape Meetings with PM  
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17. (C) In a subsequent meeting with Hashemi, he affirmed that he understood that the PM has no objection to working more closely with the Presidency Council. Hashemi said the Presidency Council does not want to compete with the PM's authority but wants to help shoulder the burden and responsibilities for policies as part of the executive branch. Hashemi, who often complains of feeling marginalized by the PM, was clearly eager to take a leading role. He said he was going to prepare the agenda for the first meeting of the group next week and that the group would focus on the "important" issues. He added he intended to tighten the organizational procedures of the group to achieve maximum results. He also spoke of the need to clarify the "authorities" of the new group.

18. (C) Regarding De-Ba'athification, Hashemi said he had sent a letter to Talabani yesterday suggesting the Presidency Council seek the suspension of the current De-Ba'athification procedures until a reformed law is passed. He was unsure of what Abdel Mehdi's reaction would be.

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Coalition Forces Not Visible Enough in the BSP  
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19. (C) Hashemi noted that the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) started yesterday. He said he heard that only Iraqi forces were involved in raids, and that no one saw Coalition forces with them. Hashemi stressed that Coalition forces need to be accompanying Iraqi forces. He said he would give the Embassy a report on how many people were detained and how many houses were raided yesterday. The DCM replied that he would have a military colleague speak with Hashemi.

